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## INDUSTRY INSIGHT

### BULKSMS.COM

April 2010

#### ***Social media a threat to SMS?***

SMS has become a trusted medium of communication for businesses and has added to the operational efficiency by enabling the sending of a quick and relevant message to a targeted database of contacts. But is the rise of social media sites like MySpace, Facebook, Twitter alongside instant messaging services offered by Skype, MSN and ICQ threatening the place of SMS messaging?

Dr Pieter Streicher, MD of BulkSMS.com says that the function of these different communication channels should be kept in mind. "Internet based social media related communication channels provide personal and public arenas for broadcasting messages and content. They are about staying in contact in the global digital café where you can pop in and have a coffee and chat any time of the day or night. In many ways social media is email on steroids with the default sending option set to "many" rather than cc'ing all your contacts when sending an email."

"The immediacy of online chat and its mobile variants, and social media in general, rely on people having Internet access to receive messages. These conversations are between individuals or within chosen communities. It is not necessarily about messaging, but about communicating cheaply via a system that potentially imitates a phone call."

In contrast, SMS messaging offers a far simpler way of communicating a message and does not require a customer or client to be in front of a computer connected to the Internet to receive a message. An SMS message is sent to a cellphone and means that the recipient can be mobile and still get important messages."

From a business perspective, SMS messaging does offer a more formal means of communicating than social media services. As a digitised memo, SMS allows for the sending of succinct notifications, reminders and alerts and, due to the fact that it supports minimal functionality, SMS messaging does not require a high-end phone or for you to be tech-savvy to use the technology to send and receive messages.

"New social media and instant messaging services are also appearing regularly. The social media network of choice from two years ago is barely mentioned anymore and in two years, the one you're using today might be outdated. SMS is established and stable. It is a time-honoured space used to communicate short messages between contacts", says Streicher.

"We see SMS as a trusted and reliable workhorse in the digital world of messaging that is here to stay. The current trend towards social media seems to offer much public relations value to firms. In contrast, the time and spend on SMS messaging offers a return on investment for businesses and enables them build direct and lasting relationships with their customers", he concludes.